

U.S. lifts Trump's sanctions on ICC prosecutor and court official

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Washington, April 5 (RHC)-- The United States has lifted sanctions imposed by former President Donald Trump on officials of the International Criminal Court who are investigating the U.S. and Israel for war crimes in Afghanistan and Palestine.

The executive action by President Joe Biden reverses one of the prior administration's more aggressive moves to target international institutions, although Biden administration officials said the U.S still objects to the ICC assertion of jurisdiction over Washington.

"We believe, however, that our concerns about these cases would be better addressed" through diplomacy "rather than through the imposition of sanctions," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement.

The ICC is a standing body based in The Hague created in 2002 to prosecute international claims of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The United States does not recognize jurisdiction of

the international court and refuses to abide by its decisions.

The Trump White House had imposed economic and travel sanctions against court officials in June 2020 saying the ICC's investigations of abuses in Afghanistan "are an attack on the rights of the American people and threaten to infringe upon our national sovereignty."

Trump's sanctions had targeted ICC chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda and the court's head of jurisdiction, Phakiso Mochochoko, for pressing ahead with investigations into the U.S. and Israel.

A spokesman for the ICC on Friday said the court and its governing body of the member states welcomed the U.S. move. Rights groups applauded Biden for throwing out Trump's sanctions — Amnesty International called them an "act of vandalism" against international justice — but called for Biden to go further, by supporting the court's work and making the United States a member country.

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